

## **FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET**

**Meeting Date:** April 14, 2016

**Agenda Item:** Wolf Island Conservation Easement

**Division:** Wildlife

**Action Needed:** Endorsement

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 5 Min

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### **Background**

Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks proposes to pursue a conservation easement on a portion of Wolf Island, owned by the Hagler family. The Hagler parcel is adjacent to FWP land, which is part of Elk Island WMA (see maps). The proposed conservation easement would comprise approximately 140 acres, nearly all of which is native Yellowstone River riparian habitat. FWP also manages the next island downstream, Crittenden Island, which is DNRC land that is leased by FWP. This proposed project would help maintain the integrity of productive riparian habitat on private and adjacent WMA lands, while also ensuring its accessibility to the public for hunting and other compatible recreation.

### **Public Involvement Process & Results**

There has been no public involvement to date. Upon Commission endorsement, FWP would conduct appropriate public review and analysis.

### **Alternatives and Analysis**

This is a unique opportunity to secure an easement on a parcel of Yellowstone River bottomland that is adjacent to a Wildlife Management Area. In recent years, several Yellowstone River properties in the area have sold to parties that have closed public access for recreational activities. A change in ownership would result in the loss of FWP's ability to positively impact the habitat on this property and a loss of much needed access for sportspersons and recreationists to Yellowstone River islands.

### **Agency Recommendation & Rationale**

FWP recommends the Commission endorse this project, which would allow the Department to complete further analysis and public review. This conservation easement would expand the conservation footprint adjacent to the WMA, benefiting high priority river bottom habitat.

### **Proposed Motion**

I move that the Commission endorse the Wolf Island conservation easement, allowing the Department to proceed with further work on this project.